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IOWA STUDENTS EXCEL IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT *Student participation and scores improve*

(DES MOINES, IOWA) – February 7, 2006 – Most of the Iowa high school students who take Advanced Placement (AP) exams earn scores high enough to qualify for college credit, according to data released by College Board, which administers the exams. In 2005, Iowa students ranked 8th in the nation with 67.2 percent of its students scoring at a level 3 or better, the benchmark indicator accepted by most colleges that allow AP for college credit.

The number of high schools offering AP classes and the number of AP exams taken both reached record highs in the state. Two hundred thirteen of the state's 385 public and non-public high schools offered AP exams in 2004-05, and 8,986 exams were taken.

Students can choose among 35 AP classes in 20 subject areas. The final exam is optional. All participants receive high school credit for each course, and those who take the exam can earn college credit if they earn a 3 or above on the 1-5 score scale.

The State Department of Education has supported increased participation in Advanced Placement courses for students to gain the challenging coursework needed to prepare them for college.

"As we encourage all students to set their goals and expectations higher, we know that those who are planning to go to college must demonstrate they have taken the most rigorous courses possible," said Judy Jeffrey, director of the Iowa Department of Education. "Advanced Placement generally is faster paced and more in-depth study, which makes it good college preparation material."

AP participation rates and test taking has increased steadily since the inception of the Iowa Online AP Academy (IOAPA), which provides AP courses to accredited public and private schools over the Internet or ICN. The Iowa Online AP Academy was started in the fall of 2001 by the Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education (B-BC) at The University of Iowa, in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Education, and is federally funded through a congressionally earmarked grant.

Through May 2005, more than 300 accredited Iowa high schools registered with the Iowa Online AP Academy, representing all 12 Area Education Agencies and 95 counties. About 95 percent are rural or small schools, according to IOAPA. During the 2004-05 school year, about 1,225 accredited public and private school students have taken one of the 15 online or ICN courses, and more than 2,000 have used

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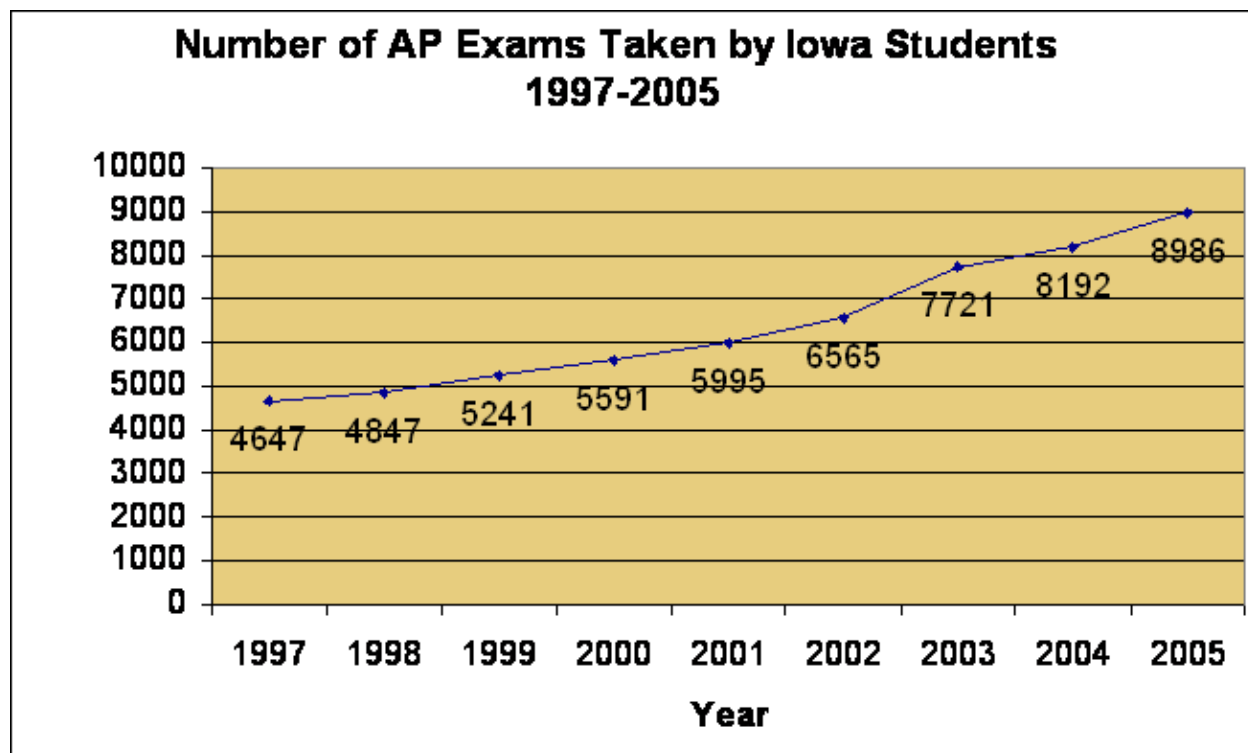
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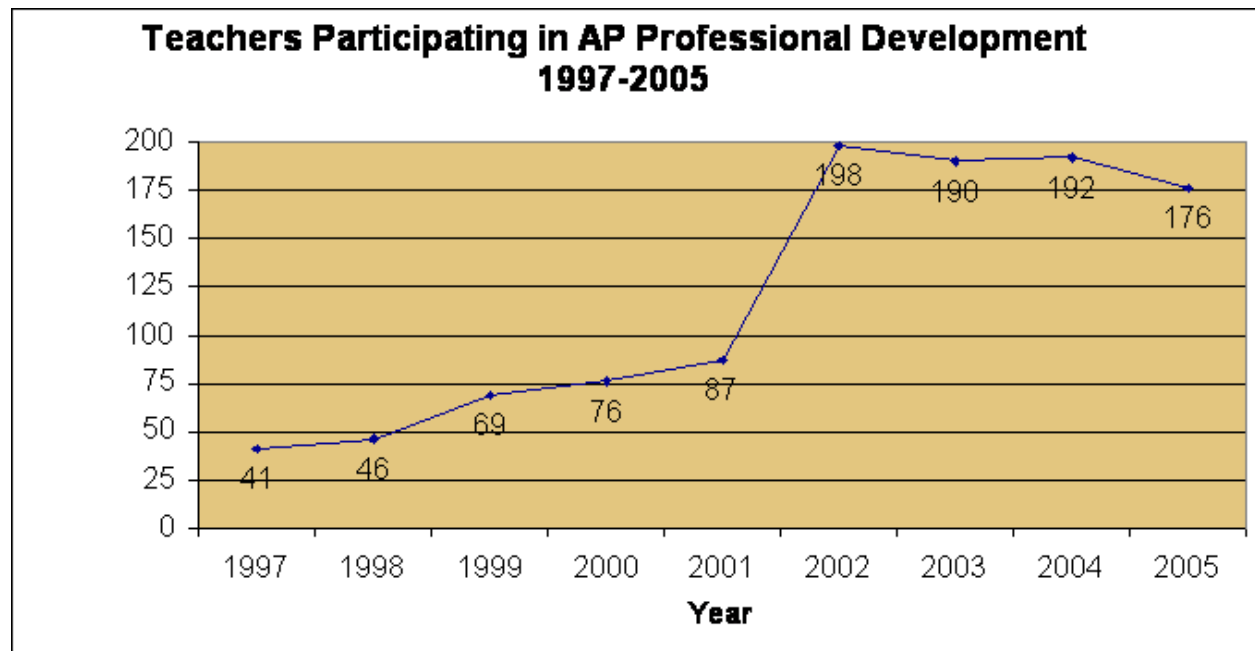
other AP materials and processes provided by the academy. Jeffrey credits IOAPA with boosting the state's overall AP growth rate of 51 percent between 2000-2005.

An essential component of the Iowa Online AP Academy program includes training and professional development for teachers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to each AP classes. IOAPA offers institution grants to teachers who attend the Advanced Placement Teacher Training Institute conducted at the University of Iowa. The grants have supported nearly 500 Iowa teachers over the past four years.

Jeffrey said increasing student participation in challenging courses will be an ongoing focus of the Department of Education.

“Our goal is to provide a variety of options to best prepare students for success beyond high schools,” she said. “We encourage more high schools to offer not only Advanced Placement, but also honors courses and dual credit courses in cooperation with their local community college or 4-year colleges and universities.”





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